

Message Text

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ORIGIN PA-02

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NO. 19 FOR CARTER FROM PA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN, OVIP (VANCE)

SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR EDITORIAL FRIDAY APRIL 1 HEADED "KEEPING COOL ON SALT."

2. SINCE SUCH HIGH HOPES WERE PLACED IN THE MOSCOW TALKS, ONE CAN ONLY SHARE THE ADMINISTRATION'S DISAPPOINTMENT THAT THEY BROKE DOWN WITHOUT AGREEMENT ON THE CENTRAL ISSUE OF STRATEGIC ARMS CONTROL. BUT IT WOULD BE SHORT-SIGHTED TO OVERREACT. THE SETBACK DOES NOT PUT AN END TO EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE AN ARMS ACCORD. THESE EFFORTS CAN AND WILL CONTINUE. HOWEVER BLUNT THE SOVIET REACTION, THERE STILL IS NO REASON TO THINK THE RUSSIANS DO NOT REGARD A SALT AGREEMENT AS VITAL TO THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE
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UNITED STATES.

3. RESTRAINT, TOO, SHOULD BE EXERCISED IN SPECULATING ON CAUSES FOR THE BREAKDOWN. WAS IT SOVIET IRRITATION OVER MR. CARTER'S HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY? CONFUSION OVER HIS UNORTHODOX OPEN-AIR DIPLOMACY? A TOUGH STANCE TO SEE HOW FAR A NEW AMERICAN PRESIDENT CAN BE PUSHED? OR

IS THERE A SIMPLER EXPLANATION -- THAT THE AMERICAN SIDE

FELT THEY COULD ACCEPT?

4. THE LATTER VARIANT IS NOT IMPLAUSIBLE. INDEED MR. CARTER CHOOSES TO INTERPRET THE FAILURE IN MOSCOW AS DISAGREEMENT OVER SUBSTANCE ON SPECIFIC PROPOSALS RATHER THAN A BASIC DISCORD IN RELATIONS. FROM MOSCOW'S POINT OF VIEW, IT CAN BE ARGUED THAT THESE PROPOSALS WERE SIMPLY TOO BOLD AND DRASTIC FOR EARLY ACCEPTANCE. THE ONE PROPOSAL CALLING FOR DEEP CUTS IN STRATEGIC WEAPONS APPARENTLY NONPLUSSED THE RUSSIANS, WHO WOULD HAVE TO REDUCE THEIR STRATEGIC LAUNCHERS EVEN UNDER THE LIMITS NEGOTIATED AT VLADIVOSTOK. AS FOR THE ALTERNATIVE U.S. PROPOSAL TO DEFER CONSIDERATION OF THE CRUISE MISSILE AND SOVIET BACKFIRE BOMBER, THE RUSSIANS COULD INTERPRET THIS AS GIVING THE U.S. THE ADVANTAGE OF TIME TO SURGE AHEAD IN DEVELOPMENT OF AN ATTRACTIVE NEW WEAPONS SYSTEM.

5. IN ANY CASE, THE MATTER OF MR. CARTER'S DIPLOMATIC STYLE INVITES COMMENT HERE. IT IS STRONG AND INNOVATIVE AND THAT IS ALL TO THE GOOD. BUT THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THE SOVIET LEADERS ARE PERPLEXED BY THE WAYS OF A NEW PRESIDENT WHICH FIT NO PAST POLITICAL MOLD. ASIDE FROM MR. CARTER'S PUSH ON HUMAN RIGHTS, HIS INCLINATION TO NEGOTIATE IN PUBLIC IS BOUND TO BE DISCONCERTING AND, IN THIS INSTANCE, MIGHT HAVE AFFECTED THE OUTCOME.

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6. WE TEND TO THINK THE PRESIDENT'S APPROACH NEEDS MATURING. GOOD NEGOTIATION, IT SEEMS TO US, MAKES CERTAIN THAT POSITIONS ON EXTREMELY COMPLEX PROBLEMS ARE IRONED OUT IN PRIVATE SUFFICIENTLY IN ADVANCE OF A MUCH-PUBLICIZED HIGH-LEVEL MEETING TO AVOID THE PUBLIC APPEARANCE OF A DIPLOMATIC SETBACK FOR EITHER SIDE. NEITHER PARTY SHOULD LOSE FACE IF POSSIBLE.

7. THIS CANNOT ALWAYS BE AVOIDED, TO BE SURE. BUT MR. CARTER HAS NO EXPERIENCE IN DEALING WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND HE MIGHT BEAR IN MIND THAT DIPLOMATIC BREAKTHROUGHS DO NOT COME IN A WEEK THROUGH PUBLIC RELATIONS ATMOSPHERICS (HOWEVER USEFUL THESE ARE) BUT AFTER WEEKS AND SOMETIMES MONTHS OF DIFFICULT NITTY-GRITTY DISCUSSIONS FIRST BEHIND CLOSED DOORS. AMERICAN DIPLOMATS HAVE LEARNED FROM YEARS OF EXPERIENCE THAT BECAUSE OF THE NATURE OF THEIR SYSTEM THE RUSSIANS ARE LESS FLEXIBLE AND IMAGINATIVE IN NEGOTIATING; THEY NEED TIME TO ASSIMILATE NEW IDEAS AND SHIFT POSITIONS. IT MAY THUS

BE UNFAIR FOR MR. CARTER (ALTHOUGH POLITICALLY POPULAR

AT HOME) TO WARN SO SOON THAT IF THE RUSSIANS DO NOT
SHOW "GOODWILL" HE WOULD CONSIDER ESCALATING THE ARMS
RACE. IF MR. BREZHNEV IS INDULGING IN A BIT OF TOUGH
POSTURING, SO IS THE PRESIDENT.

8. ALL OF WHICH IS TO SAY THAT THE TWO SIDES MUST NOW
MOVE ON TO THE NEXT STEP. BOTH HAVE HOMEWORK TO DO.
THEY MUST ASSESS THE STATE OF NEGOTIATIONS AS WELL AS
THE PROPOSALS THEMSELVES AND COME AT THE QUESTION
AGAIN. SECRETARY OF STATE VANCE WILL MEET WITH HIS
SOVIET COUNTERPART IN EUROPE IN MAY. NEEDLESS TO SAY,
MUCH CAN BE DONE BEFORE THEN TO CLARIFY POSITIONS
THROUGH QUIET BILATERAL TALKS AT LOWER LEVEL.

9. AS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, THE MATTER OF SOVIET PRIDE
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CANNOT BE DISCOUNTED. THE RUSSIANS CONCEIVABLY DID NOT
WISH TO GIVE MR. CARTER THE POLITICAL BENEFIT OF
ACCEPTING A SALT PROPOSAL AT THE FIRST GO-AROUND AND
MAKING IT APPEAR THEY COULD BE CHASTISED IN PUBLIC WITH
IMPUNITY. YET WE DO NOT THINK THIS ISSUE IS WHAT REALLY
UPSET THE APPLE CART. NOR THAT THE PRESIDENT SHOULD
REFRAIN FROM PURSUING HIS HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS. ALL
THE SIGNS FROM MOSCOW -- INCLUDING PROGRESS ON SECONDARY
BUT VITAL OTHER ISSUES SUCH AS UNDERGROUND NUCLEAR
TESTS, ANTI-SATELLITE WEAPONS, MILITARY LIMITATIONS IN
THE INDIAN OCEAN, AND SPREAD OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS -- TELL
US THAT THE RUSSIANS HAVE NO WISH TO GO BACK TO THE COLD
WAR. END TEXT.
CHRISTOPHER

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